

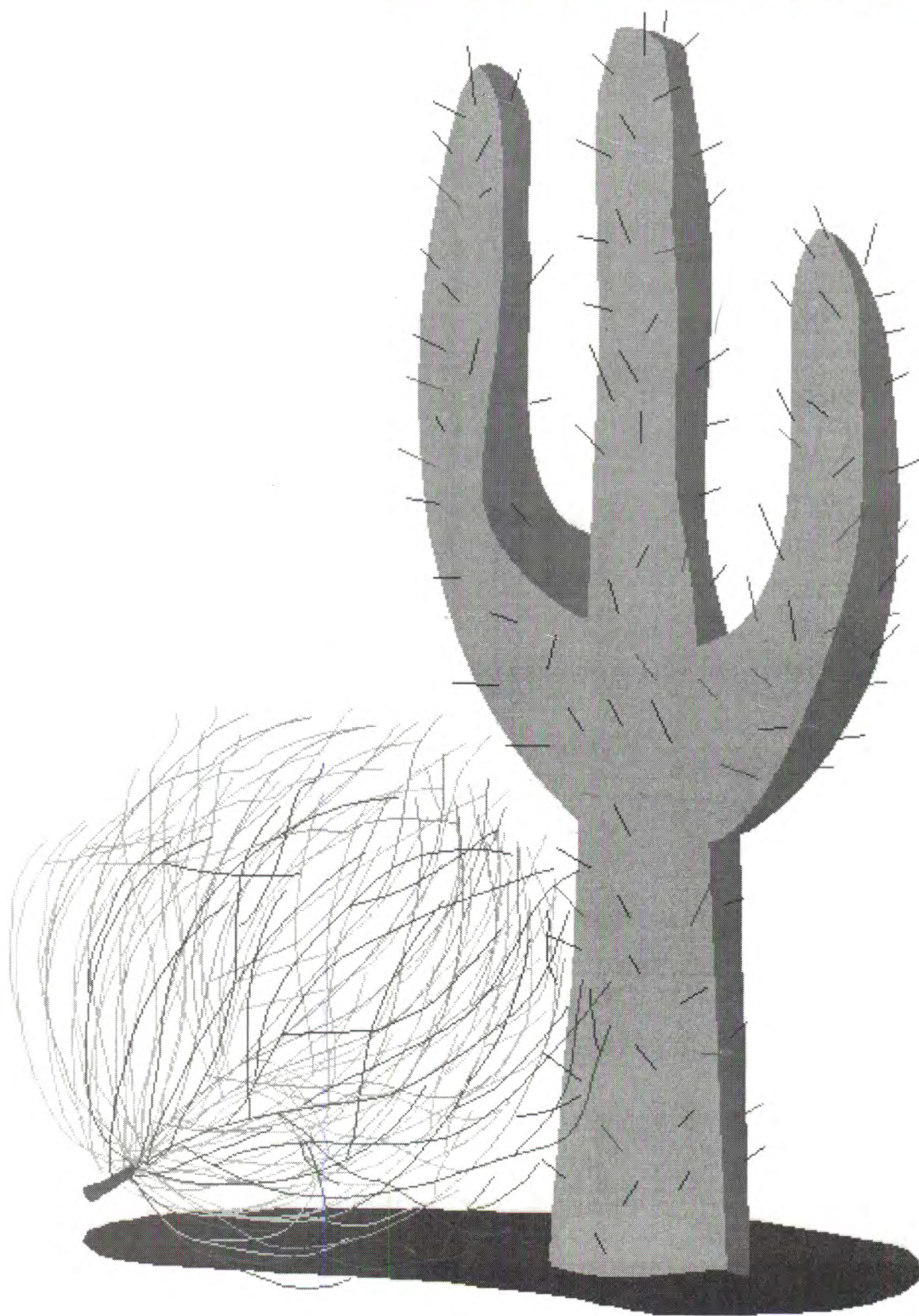
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Society

extended attributes

The magazine of the OS/2 community

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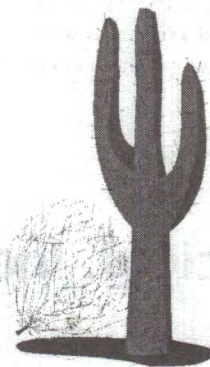
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I've got your feature installer right *here*

by Bill Schindler, Editor-in-chief

.comment

The original concept of IBM's Feature Installer—a way to install updates and software over the Internet—seemed like a good idea. It did have drawbacks: the implementation of the first version was a little flaky and installation success depended on the quality of your Internet connection. But overall, it seemed like a good idea.

Then somebody who probably never had to install a piece of software in their lives decided to make Feature Installer the only IBM installation program. Bad idea. *Really* bad idea.

Maybe it was a good idea for some middle manager. Using Feature Installer exclusively means that there's only one code base to maintain. There's only one installation program to support. There's only one installation script to write for each product that ships. All good reasons for choosing a single installation program.

But Feature Installer was probably the worst choice they could make. It's a Netscape plug-in, which means that it relies on Netscape. Netscape isn't exactly famous for being fast, solid, or small.

But worse than relying on Netscape, Feature Installer itself is buggy, dead slow, and infuriating to use. Which adds up to an installation experience that leaves you wondering if the software you're installing is worth the bother.

I installed Visual Age C++ a few times on a couple machines here, using different settings. In the process, I got an overdose of Feature Installer (FI) problems. Here's just a few:

- FI takes between four and seven minutes to start. There's no splash screen, no status bar, nothing but hard disk activity.
- FI standardly produced a 130 Mb swap file on a machine with 96 Mb of RAM.
- One out of three times, FI would crash in the middle of the installation.
- *Not once* did FI succeed in installing everything on the first pass. There were never any error messages, but invariably, programs wouldn't run because FI hadn't copied a needed DLL or EXE file.
- Using FI is an exercise in extreme patience. It standardly takes 45 seconds to a minute to respond to user input. It locks you out of using your system. And it takes forever to actually install the software.

In fact, FI is so bad, I've started manually unpacking and hand copying things based on FI's own response files.

IBM should grab a copy of the Java-based Install Everywhere and learn how a cross-platform installation program should really be written. ☹

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The Phoenix OS/2 Society, Inc (POSSI) is an international organization of computer users with an interest in IBM's OS/2 operating system and related issues.

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A new Notes client?

from an OS2-ISP listserv message written
by Michael Lueck, mlueck@lueckdatasystems.com

Michael Lueck found a message about a Notes 4.6.1 client in the news group at www.notes.net, which may be of interest to POSSI members:

So! there was a Notes 4.62 client for OS/2 after all, well hidden though. But—for all you people wanting to know how:

1. Copy the Server installation directory from the CD to the hard drive. (This is just so you can modify a package file)

2. Edit the P32WRK.PKG file and change the line
DISPLAY='NO'
to
DISPLAY='YES'

3. Run INSTPM.EXE and select the "server" installation. You should now be able to see and select *only* the

"Notes Workstation" choice. After the install, add "UnsupportedClient=1" to your NOTES.INI file.

Apparently, Lotus did most or all of the code for Notes 4.6 OS/2, but decided to not release it. I haven't found a problem with it yet.

Michael says that he installed the software on his ThinkPad 600; screen lockup is a grouch with Notes running—something goes to sleep big time. "I'll continue to test to see what it does. One INI change I made is to change the kit type to 1, which is for a workstation install." ☺

Free access to resume-building software

press release

Gloria was laid off after lunch. Two hours later she had created an expertly designed resume, emailed it to three potential employers, posted it to seven on-line job banks, and printed out several copies on professionally designed stationery.

10MinuteResume.com made it possible. It's a new Web site that offers FREE access to sophisticated resume-building software and resume-posting tools, including fax service, email, and printing.

"This will streamline the tedious, nerve-racking job of constructing a resume," said Drew Hession-Kunz, VP of Development for CareerAdviser Inc., the Boston Web company that developed the process. "Whether you are mid-career or a recent graduate, this software can help turn a mediocre resume into a professional document that lets your qualifications shine."

10MinuteResume replaces cumbersome and expensive software packages with an intelligent expert-system that operates entirely on the Internet. It walks you through a series of simple but provocative steps to help you create a professional resume online. You will learn, for example:

- The "punch" phrases that add action and interest to

your resume

- How to highlight your strengths and minimize employment gaps, frequent job switches, and disparate industry experience
- How to use keyword summaries to make resume scanning work for you.
- Why a functional resume sometimes outperforms a chronological resume

Whether you start from scratch or import an existing resume, you can experiment with a variety of layouts and formats. When you are satisfied, your polished resume can be printed, faxed, emailed, or sent electronically to a print shop for custom treatment.

10MinuteResume helps you present your qualifications for maximum effectiveness and visual appeal. Make your resume work overtime for you. In 10 minutes. ☺

The write stuff

What does it take to create good computer documentation?

by Esther Schindler

My father was in the textiles business, so as a teenager I was encouraged to do a lot of sewing. It didn't hurt that Pop got a lot of fabric samples, and brought home everything from upholstery fabric to fine woolens to "the wet look." My crowning achievement as a seamstress may have been the pantsuit, constructed of bright yellow and orange upholstery fabric, lined with bright blue rayon. I thought I looked striking. My date—I was fifteen at the time—said I looked like a pimp.

Perhaps that's why I quit sewing, or maybe it was a lack of time after discovering boys and computers. But yesterday, after a hiatus of about twenty years, I decided to take on a sewing project. When Bill and I read the pattern instructions, we were really appalled by the documentation.

It's not just that the wording was confusing. What bewildered us most was the amazing amount of information that it assumed we knew, although this pattern was described in terms that make "Sewing for Dummies" sound like an intellectual achievement. It's been twenty years since I had to remember how to stay stitch anything, and the none-too-consistent directions didn't give me the first idea how, or why I should bother. It took fifteen minutes to figure out if those corners were really supposed to be sewn together with right sides facing... and I still managed to sew on the sleeves inside-out.

Not too long ago, a participant in an online discussion complained about the sorry state of affairs in the computer industry, especially in regard to the manuals for computer hardware and software. Judging by the quality of the non-computer documentation I just encountered, I don't think there's much to complain about.

Words to the wise

Nonetheless, it occurs to me that I've probably read more computer manuals than anybody else in this user group. I have to. I review dozens of applications and gizmos every year. If I say that this program doesn't have a such-and-so feature, the last thing I want is to receive a phone call from the vendor, saying, "Hey! It's documented right there on page 42!" Plus, it's my job to describe what the product is supposed to do, and presumably the documentation will let me know what that is. So, however boring or confusing or tedious they may be, I have to read a lot of manuals.

As a glutton for punishment, I've foisted even more words on an unsuspecting public. I've been involved in writing a few manuals, myself. I was lead author for the DeScribe 5.0 manual and I wrote the manual for Perfect Niche's *Smack!* OS/2 label program. I've also written or co-

written a few of the books that explain what the manual doesn't, from the *WordPerfect 6.0 SuperBook* to the *Domino Go Webserver Frontrunner*.

With that sordid past, perhaps I can share what I think makes a successful manual. Several of you are software developers, so I can fool myself into believing that my advice can have a positive effect on the computer industry.

Food for thought

When I want to explain to someone how a manual should be written, I pull out a copy of Irene Kao's cookbook, *The Key to Chinese Cooking*. Other than a superb collection of recipes—we're especially fond of her hot and sour soup, and the book falls open to chicken in black bean sauce—the cookbook catches exactly the right balance in the writer:reader relationship. Kao's recipes make you feel as if she's standing next to you, describing what to do and what you should expect the food to look like when you do it, but staying out of your way (especially when you're deep frying a duck and shouldn't be distracted).

A good manual helps the reader understand what he can accomplish. It has an upbeat attitude and an underlying enthusiasm, but an utter absence of marketing. There's nothing quite so obnoxious as a manual telling you how great an application you've bought, when you can't figure out how to make the damned thing print.

Book 'em, Dan-o

My first computer specific advice on manuals is to *have one*. I'm glad that manuals are available online, because they're easy to search when I know what I'm looking for. But personally, I prefer a printed manual. Aside from the portability issues (and our bathroom isn't yet wired into the network), online manuals lack the "encyclopedia feature," where you page through the book ostensibly looking for instructions on one known topic, but are happily distracted by the discovery of an unexpected application feature. I love that moment when I say, "I didn't know it could do that!" and I bet you do, too. Good software, like good music, is infinitely discoverable.

Fewer manuals include tutorials these days, and fewer still have good ones. When you're trying to come up to speed with a new program, nothing is as helpful as a tutorial that takes you through the basic features, and accomplishes something useful in the process. It also reassures you that you know what you need to know, at least to get started. My favorite tutorial was included with the Windows 3.0-era Arts & Letters, which did an especially good job of engaging me. The more I used it, the more I was

interested in what A&L could do, and the more enthusiastic I became about getting to work with it.

A tutorial's purpose is to help you find out the most important things that the program is capable of, and to show you how to take advantage of them. Through a gradual set of exercises, a tutorial should teach the basics, cover the top level of features (and it's okay for the vendor to glow proudly about them at this point, at least with a parenthetical "isn't this cool—and you should know we're the only folks who can paint with transparent ink that way"). By the end of the tutorial, you should feel like you know what to do next. Excellent tutorials also provide pointers for "where to go from here." If, for example, I've just learned how to create simple diagrams, the better tutorials will tell me that chapter 5 of the reference manual can instruct me on how to enhance them. That keeps me from stopping at the end of the tutorial and never exploring further.

Maybe tutorials disappeared because too few people knew how to write them well. Many tutorials turn into a self-competition, as I see how fast I can enter the text. In its "follow the bouncing ball" approach, a tutorial has to stop, every so often, and ask the reader a question. Require that the reader use a skill learned in the previous example, such as saying, "Create a square box, just like you learned in the last chapter; if you forgot how, see page 18." Get her to think, for just a moment.

Just for reference

Whether in the tutorial or the reference section, it's important to provide the reader with accessible levels of detail. The manual should provide the basics first, and help the user to concentrate on those. But while she's looking at the manual, give her a little extra advice: have boxes with "for the advanced user," with tips meant for the "kids, don't try this at home" crowd. After all, the manual isn't there just to answer the question the reader has in mind; it's to help

the user learn how to get the most of the application, and that means learning the answers to questions she hasn't thought to ask, yet.

One way to do that is by providing plenty of examples. In fact, it's almost impossible to have too many examples—accompanied by screen shots that show the progression of the process. Good manuals tell the reader how the feature works, and then show how and why to use it, and what it looks like when it's been implemented correctly. (A tip on how to know you've done it wrong is good, too, just like driving directions that say, "If you pass the Texaco station, you missed the turn to our house.")

In good documentation, the examples exhibit the range of the feature. For instance, the manual will show a basic scenario in which the default values are perfectly appropriate. A second example has a different sort of situation, in which you'd want to change options—and make it clear why. And, depending on the feature complexity, the manual may provide a situation wherein it's right to pull out all the stops. Even if that happens rarely, curious users want to know why the software publisher provided the option.

Ideally, examples are easy for the reader to relate to. For instance, my chapter on text formatting in the *WordPerfect 6.0 SuperBook* used an example of Bill's recipe for chocolate silk ice cream. Everyone knows what a recipe looks like, so a reader could easily follow along with attention on my instructions, not the example details. (Besides, it's a good recipe for ice cream.)

Funny you should say that

The best manuals also have humor. Why are so many computer manuals boring and dry?

Once, long ago, I received a letter from the user group liaison from a font software company. The letter was signed by the "Corporate slave to user groups." The sense of humor demonstrated in that signature made me practically run to the phone to

ask for product information. Though I never used the software, I'm told that the manual was equally as funny, and the product was excellent. I'm not surprised.

Computer manual humor isn't just a desire to be entertained, though that helps. Gail Godwin said, "Good teaching is one-fourth preparation and three-fourths theater." However, writing with humor shows an empathy for your audience; you care about them enough to try to get them to laugh. Companies who show they care are rare indeed, and users appreciate them.

Besides, the reader has to slog through 320 pages of instructions, explaining how to use the vendor's stuff. Can't the manual author at least make it enjoyable? The book doesn't have to tell jokes, mind you. In good manuals, the humor doesn't get in the way of communicating the message; in fact, it enhances it. But manuals written with humor are often more effective. The good ones pick funny examples (that are no less accurate), laugh at themselves, and let their personality show through.

Not every great manual has a personal approach, but many do. Like my example of Kao's cookbook, the personal touch is part of what makes it seem like the author is standing right there. How can a manual written with no personality create the sense of "someone right there" when nobody is home?

One important piece of advice, for manual readers or writers, is to shoot any programmer who says, "I'll just write the manual myself." Programmers usually do this when they're too broke to pay a professional for the job. Often, programmers justify this cost savings by saying, "Nobody knows the application better than I do," but that's exactly why they shouldn't write the manual. The programmer knows too much, and his attention is stuck on how the application works under the covers, instead of where it matters: how the user uses it.

And "how the user uses it" is the point of the whole exercise. The worst manuals I've read had no sense of what mattered to the

continued on page 13

Warped networks

by David Both

two warped

In recent posts on the POSSI list servers, I have noticed many questions about networking. So, this month, I begin a series on networking that may help answer some of those questions. Let's start with the basics.

The network

A network can be defined in a number of different ways depending upon the level at which you view it.

At the simplest level, the physical, a network is a wire connecting two or more computers. There are different types of wire and different ways to connect the wire between the computers. This level defines the network topology, such as Ethernet or Token Ring and the wiring class, such as Category 3 or 5.

At a somewhat higher level, a network can be defined as two or more interconnected computers which can communicate with each other. There are also several different ways to make these connections between computers. This level defines the network protocols such as NETBIOS or TCP/IP.

At a still higher level, a network is a group of interconnected computers which share resources, such as files and printers. This level is implemented by the network operating system (NOS) like Novell Netware or Warp Server.

Although these things define the thing which is a network, they do not truly define what a network is.

Networks were originally implemented primarily to share expensive resources between many users. A company in which ten users needed to print on a (then) \$10,000 laser printer could not afford to spend \$100,000 for 10 printers. It was more economical to purchase one printer and install a simple network to share that printer.

Today's network, however, is more than just sharing resources. Many computers routinely come with 4 GB hard drives and 6 GB and 8 GB hard drives are becoming more common. Printers are inexpensive, with very high print quality available for just a few hundred dollars.

Networks today are more about collaboration and work groups. Collaborative computing was, and is, being defined by groupware like Lotus Notes. It is about the sharing of information and the automation of workflow processes. In more and more companies, the network defines the work process rather than the other way around.

In today's network, all the more traditional concepts of networking are at work; file and print sharing takes place; computers talk to each other as users send messages via email. But these things are taking place below the user's level of awareness. Those functions which used to be the reason for the network are now merely the enablers for the

collaborative, workgroup computing which takes place at the users' level of awareness.

Simple definition

In general, a network consists of two or more computers which are connected by network adapters and cable. Each computer can communicate with the other systems. Resources of these computers can be shared and used by the other computers in the network.

There are two kinds of computers in a network: servers and requesters. Servers share resources such as files and printers. Requesters use those network resources. A computer can be both a server and a requester.

Even in a collaborative environment, one primary function of a network is to provide access to files and printers. This is normally accomplished through the use of one or more computers in the network which are designated as servers. Each server has an appropriate NOS installed which performs this function. Warp Server performs this function in an OS/2 Warp environment.

The file and print server shares printers and disk drives. Entire disk drives may be shared, or only specified directories, or even individual files may be shared.

When a user is allowed access to a shared disk, directory, or file, the user may only be able to read files, or he or she may be given the authority, known as permissions, to modify, create, or to execute files. This type of access control ensures that users can only perform the tasks which they require and only on the files or directories that they need. Files and directories to which they are not allowed access are unavailable to the users.

Domains

Warp Server, like its predecessors LAN Server versions 1 through 4, uses *domains* to provide a single network image and to simplify administration tasks. A domain consists of one or more servers that share network resources in a single, logical system. Users in a Warp Server network log onto a domain rather than a server. All of the servers in the domain are viewed by the requester workstation as a single system image which is the equivalent of a single server. Once logged onto the domain, the resources shared by all of the servers in the domain are available to the requester workstation. Warp Server for e-business also makes the resources shared by Windows NT servers available to the requester workstations.

Shared resources in the domain are assigned *aliases* and the requester workstations access the shared resource using the alias. If the location of a resource changes, the adminis-

trator simply changes the alias definition to reflect the new location in the domain of the resource. This is totally transparent to the user (the requester workstation) and no changes need to be made in the configuration at the requester.

Multiple domains can share the same physical LAN. This provides for logical grouping of network resources and eases administrative tasks. It also helps to logically isolate the resources shared by the different domains. For example, the Human Resources department may be in one domain, and engineering in another.

Server roles

Servers can take different roles in a domain. There must be one, but only one, domain controller. Other server roles include the backup domain controller and additional server.

The domain controller is responsible for managing the domain. In addition to sharing resources, the domain controller's primary tasks are to:

- Maintain the list of user and group IDs
- Handle user logons and logoffs.
- Manage aliases for the entire domain.

The backup domain controller is a server which can be used to handle user logon and logoff if the domain controller is busy. It can also share resources on the network.

Additional servers play no role in management of the network, but simply share resources. All servers, including the additional servers, communicate with each other and maintain a copy of the NET.ACC file, which is where user, group, and alias information is stored.

Peer networks

The basic purpose of a peer to peer network is the same as that of a server based network—to share resources. The difference is that, in a peer network, the resources tend to be scattered around the user's computers on the network rather than concentrated on one or more servers.

A peer network does not have a file and print server. Each peer workstation may have one or more resources which are to be shared on the network. When a peer workstation shares a resource it becomes a peer server. Many computers can share resources in a peer network.

Peer network administration

Administration of a small peer network is easy and straightforward. As the number of peer requesters on the network grows, however, managing the network becomes much more time consuming and complex. As a result, the maximum number of systems in a peer network should be limited to ten or twelve. When there are more than

that number of computers in the network you should consider switching to a true server with Warp Server.

The primary administration difference in a peer network is that administrative tasks must be performed at each computer. The list of user IDs, for example, which require access to the resources shared by a peer server must be maintained locally on that computer. Each peer must be administered locally and individually.

There is no centralized management for sharing resources or managing users. This is good in a very small network because there is no need to wait for a network administrator to make changes. If another user requests access to a resource on your computer, you can create the share immediately and add the user ID if there is not one already. The other user has then only to create the connection to have access to the resource.

Centralized management is better in a larger network because the number of user IDs and shared resources in a large network become too cumbersome to manage effectively in a peer environment. It can be done—it is just much more time-consuming than the centralized management offered in the domain environment of Warp Server.

Next month, I will go into more detail about how OS/2 implements networking. ☺

A history of the lost colonists

Exploring Galactic Civilizations Gold

by David Both

review

We didn't know where we were when we exited from the wormhole. We did know we were not in the Milky Way galaxy, and our instruments could detect it nowhere in the heavens. We were definitely lost, with no hope of returning home.

We received radio signals indicating that this galaxy had other inhabitants, but we could not tell where they were using the colony ship's instruments. We had to find a habitable planet and land, so we could start our colony and learn to survive in this new—and possibly hostile—galaxy.

The early years

Fortunately, three star systems with habitable planets were in the sector into which we had emerged. Short range scans indicated that one was a class 26, a rare occurrence. Class 18, 24, and 25 planets were also in this sector, all uninhabited, but very beautiful and well suited to colonization.

After landing on the class 26 planet, we christened our system "Home" to remind us of our heritage, and our hope that we might someday return to Earth. Our planet was named Home Prime.

The first order of business was establishing political, social, scientific, economic, and military organization. We started with an Imperium because we needed strong centralized control.

The government put in place strong socially oriented policies and concentrated on building schools and universities, and the agricultural infrastructure at first. Only then could we spend precious resources on the entertainment network we value so highly.

During this early part of our history, the military built a scout ship to locate other star systems with habitable planets. We could not afford to have all of our population on a

"By far, the best turn-based simulation game I have ever played"

Eventually, we began launching colony ships to the nearby planetary systems. After we had several colonies thriving in this and nearby sectors, and more scouts exploring this galaxy, it was possible for many of us to really begin to think of this world, this galaxy as home.

The aliens

Our scouts located two alien civilizations.

Both are very smart, but the Drengin Empire did not seem very happy to see us. Our initial contacts with them seemed to go well, but an undercurrent of something always made our diplomats' blood run cold. Spies soon told us what the diplomats had sensed—the Drengin Empire was not to be trusted.

The Arceans, on the other hand, welcomed us with open arms. Almost as soon as we had developed the requisite diplomatic and alliance technologies, we became allies.

The Drengin Empire first went to war against the Arceans so we, as allies, aided the Arceans during the early years of the war.

We were not really ready for war, so the government raised taxes and spending to help pay for the war and for more research. Production was switched to warships, but we had already colonized most of the inhabitable systems not already taken by the Drengins or the Arceans.

Our shipyards began to design and turn out some very customized and powerful warships. Unfortunately, we were only beginning to understand the requirements of interstellar war, so our first designs were not very successful. We took a lot of casualties in early battles.

During what became known as Phase 1 of the First Interstellar War, we did not invade any of the Drengin Empire's planets. The Arceans did so and were somewhat successful at it, taking control of two Drengin star systems.

The war actually seemed to be going well for us. New technologies had enhanced our weapons, engines, and sensors. Defensive systems such as shields and bioarmor reduced casualties, while making it easier to kill enemy ships.

The war took a decidedly nasty turn when the Arceans attacked some of our ships in a sector well behind the front lines and killed many of our friends. It was a treacherous act and it is a day that will live in infamy so long as humans live in this galaxy.

We took very heavy losses at the beginning of Phase 2 of the war, because the Arceans had far more ships than we. Although their technology was not as advanced as

Galactic Civilizations Gold \$39.95 (\$19.95 upgrade)

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single planet or in a single star system. After the scout left on its mission, construction began on the first new colony ship. It did not have great range, but the scout quickly sent back information of many nearby planets suitable for our use.

Scientists were also busy in these early days. In a few years they had unlocked the secrets of cold fusion. Now we had energy to power the social infrastructure.

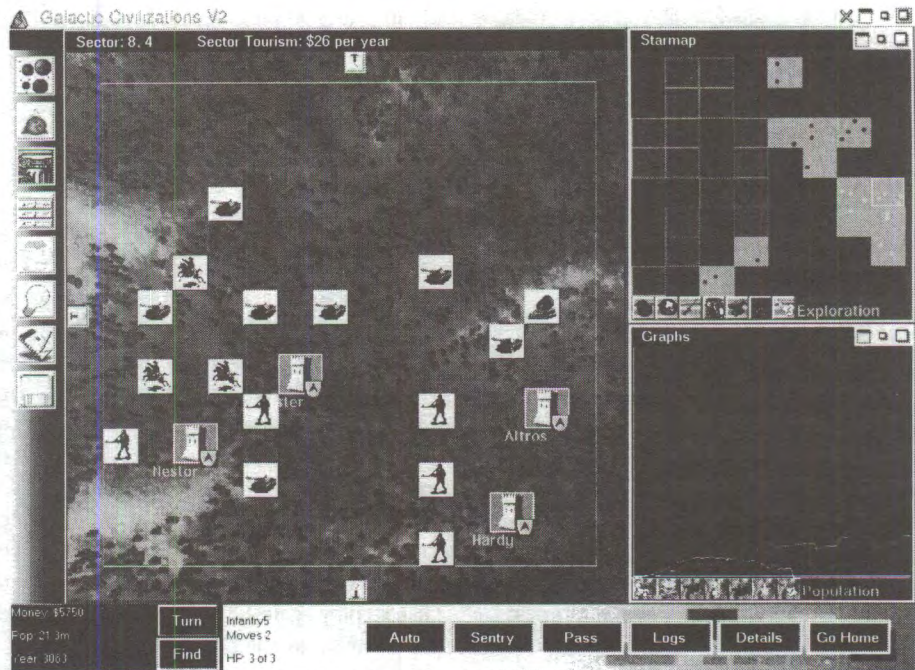
The scientists then turned to nano-electronics, and then to a universal translator. We needed to know what the aliens at the other end of those signals were saying to us.

ours, their huge numbers more than made up for the lack of technology. We were hard pressed to defend some sectors.

Our economy had relied very heavily upon trade with the Arceans, so the war reduced our ability to build the ships we needed to wage war. It took many years to recover from that loss.

It is a good thing that both the Arceans and the Drengins occupied, for the most part, the "southeast" quarter of the galaxy. Generally, we were able to develop a defense in depth that usually prevented them from breaking through into our heavily populated sectors.

Sometimes they did get through, however, and they even attempted to land ground troops on several systems. They



were unsuccessful in these attempts, but it cost us many more casualties.

We, however, did land troops on three Arcean planetary systems that were located well behind the main front. By conquering

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these systems, we significantly reduced their ability to disrupt our supply lines.

Peace?

In the year 2574 we achieved a peace settlement with both races. They continued to wage war against each other, however, so the prospects for a completely peaceful galaxy did not look good.

Home—Earth, that is—seems a little closer now, in 2579, since we have developed spatial rift technology.

However, the war between the Drengin Empire and the Arceans still rages. A species we call the Outsiders has appeared out of nowhere, right in the center of the galaxy, and has begun attacking everyone in sight. The Arceans have taken the brunt of their assault so far, but their cube-shaped warships are headed in this direction.

We do not know what the future will bring, but we do know that it will be very interesting.

Great fun

What a great and fun game! Galactic Civilizations Gold (GCG) by Stardock Systems, Inc. is, by far, the best turn-based simulation game I have ever played.

GCG is a very complex simulation and has many factors that need to be juggled to be successful. I have played GC since version 1 and become re-addicted to it every time a new version comes out. This time was no exception.

It is impossible to describe the full range of features contained by this simulation, but there is a huge number. The revised alien AIs are a significant improvement, and the planetary governors make it very easy to manage resources and social projects in each system.

My favorite feature is the shipyards. Here I can design many different types of ships from swift, lightly armed scouts to huge dreadnoughts that carry incredible amounts of firepower. I always end up designing most of my ships because the ships provided by default at various techno-

logical levels do not meet my needs. I like the fastest engines available and heavy shielding. Weapons always come last so my ships may be more lightly armed than the aliens', but speed is very important. A heavily armed ship that cannot reach the enemy is of no use at all.

Winning

Galactic Civilizations can be won in a number of ways. Diplomacy and war can both be paths to victory.

I like to play against at least two alien races. I always play the Drengins because they tend to be warlike and despicable. Each of the five alien races has its own personality and that can affect how you must act to win the game.

In addition to the Drengin Empire, the Torians, the Arcean Empire, the Altarian Council, and the Yor, there are two other potential opponents to worry about. The Outsiders sometimes show up, using ships that resemble the Borg. The Ominorians can also get you. Both the Outsiders and the Ominorians are very nasty.

In addition, systems with very low satisfaction ratings can turn rebel and add another wild card to the game.

It is sometimes impossible to win without going to war at some point. At other times you can just ignore everyone else and develop the technology required to leave the physical plane all together—but not if the aliens are very smart.

Usually it is imperative to interact with the aliens on some level. The universal translator, trade, and diplomacy technologies are critical in early stages of the game because they provide the tools for this interaction. I like to begin trade, and negotiate technological swaps as early in the game as possible. This benefits both human and alien and lays the groundwork for later alliances.

If you can enter into alliances with all of the alien races in the galaxy, you have won the game. I usually find that a combination approach works. Some races, usually the

Drengins, have to be destroyed because they only respond to war. So I usually go to war against the Drengins and then form alliances with whoever is left. Sometimes a very short war in which I destroy the Drengin fleet and then demand peace allows me to complete the technology development required to win by leaving the galaxy.

Beware! The game can throw you a curve. If things get too peaceful, an ally can turn against you. Sometimes a coup has taken place, sometimes an inexplicable act of treachery is committed against you.

Technical support

Installation was easy. Unfortunately, a bug in the installation prevents all of the files required for shipyards from being copied.

A quick visit to the Stardock Web site provided the download files and I was soon in business. I installed the upgrade in the middle of a game and the shipyards began to work immediately.

I have always had good results when it was necessary to contact Stardock for support. The fix for me has always been a download from the Web site.

Rating

Despite the shipyards glitch, I give Galactic Civilizations Gold a very *hot* rating. This game is well thought out and implemented. I love to play this game and that is the ultimate test of any game. It is challenging, surprising, stimulating, and loads of fun. Oh yes—my wife complains that I spend too much time "saving the galaxy." ☹

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history.

A list of events scheduled by the Phoenix OS/2 Society and other OS/2 user groups.

May 1999

- 4** net.sig (Internet SIG). Meeting is 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Coordinator Mike Briggs. Location: KDC, 2999 N 44th St, 4th floor, Phoenix.

5 Magazine submission deadline for June issue. Articles should be sent to editor@possi.org. For other arrangements, call 602-585-5852.

11 General meeting. Another mystery. Meeting is 7:00pm to 9:00pm. Q&A session is 6:30pm to 7:00pm. Location: Mountain Preserve Reception Center, 1431 East Dunlap, Phoenix.

22 Board meeting and magazine prep. Meeting is 10:00am to 1:00pm. Eat a brunch, learn about the inner workings of the Society, and help get extended attributes ready to mail. Location: Bill and Esther Schindler's house in north Scottsdale, 9355 E Mark Lane. Call 602-585-5852 or send email to esther@bitranch.com for directions.

June 1999

- net.sig (Internet SIC). Meeting is 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Coordinator Mike Briggs. Location: KDC, 2999 N 44th St, 4th floor, Phoenix.
- 5 Magazine submission deadline for July issue. Articles should be sent to editor@possi.org. For other arrangements, call 602-585-5852.
- 8 General meeting; Kim Cheung, showing Wise Manager. Meeting is 7:00pm to 9:00pm. Q&A session is 6:30pm to 7:00pm. Location: Mountain Preserve Reception Center, 1431 East Dunlap, Phoenix.
- 22 Want to represent the Society at a user group event in New York City? The Association of PC User Groups, of which POSSI is a member, is holding a regional gathering June 20 and 21, following NYCPC's InterGalactic on June 19 and just before PC Expo on June 22-24. The APCUG event will be held at the New Yorker hotel in NYC. (More information is available at www.apcug.org/events/pcexpo/spring99.htm.) To represent POSSI, it's not a requirement that you have an official role in running the user group. However, if you're interested in attending, the board would like to bless your participation. Drop an email to

May

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president@possi.org, and Dick will talk to you about specifics.

26 Board meeting and magazine prep.

July 1999

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| | | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | |
| 6 net.sig (Internet SIG). Meeting is 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Coordinator Mike Briggs. | | | | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Location: KDC, 2999 N 44th St, 4th floor, Phoenix. | | | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 5 Magazine submission deadline for August issue. Articles should be sent to editor@possi.org . For other arrangements, call 602-585-5852. | | | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 13 General meeting; OS/2 in small business. Meeting is 7:00pm to 9:00pm. Q&A session is 6:30pm to 7:00pm. Location: Lumature, Scottsdale Road (north of Greenway), Scottsdale. | | | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 24 Board meeting and magazine prep. | | | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

August 1999

- 3 net.sig (Internet SIG). Meeting is 6:00pm to 8:00pm.
Coordinator Mike Briggs.
Location: KDC, 2999 N 44th St, 4th floor, Phoenix.
- 5 Magazine submission deadline for September issue. Articles should be sent to editor@possi.org. For other arrangements, call 602-585-5852.
- 10 FOOBAR (Friends of OS/2 Barbeque And Revelry), celebrating POSSI's 5th anniversary.
- 28 Board meeting and magazine prep.
- | August | | | | | | |
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September 1999

- 5** Magazine submission deadline for September issue. Articles should be sent to editor@possi.org. For other arrangements, call 602-585-5852.
- | September | | | | | | |
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- 25** Board meeting and magazine prep.

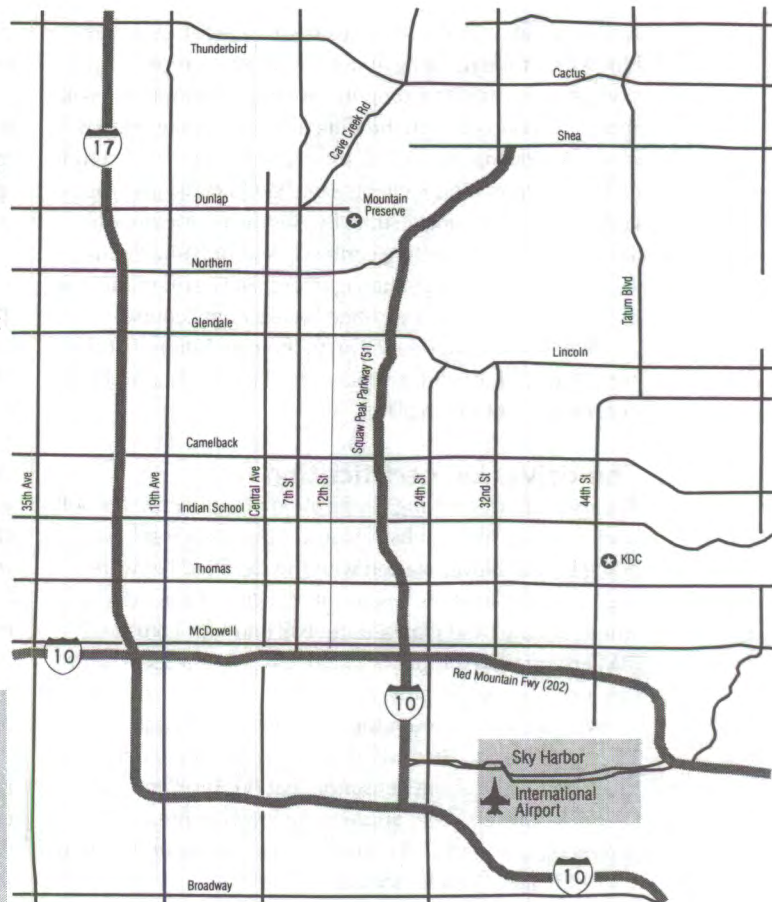
Meeting locations

Directions to meeting locations.

General meetings are held at the Mountain Preserve Reception Center, 1431 East Dunlap, Phoenix.

From the Black Canyon, exit at Dunlap and head east. From the Squaw Peak, exit at Northern. Go west to 12th Street, turn right, go north to Dunlap, turn right, and it's two blocks up on the right.

The "How OS/2 Works General Interest Group" and the Internet SIG (net.sig) meet at Knowledge Development Center, 2999 N 44th St, Suite 400. That's just north of Thomas, in the building with the green dome. Plenty of free parking is available in the garage behind the building. ☺



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continued from page 5

person in front of the keyboard. The first manual for the OS/2 accounting program, *InCharge!*, began with details about font and color choices and didn't give instructions for how to set up accounts and enter checks until the third chapter. That disorganization kept me from adopting a program I really wanted to like. (And yes, it was written by the programmer.)

Maybe you're astonished that I haven't mentioned a good index yet—particularly one that lists topics by the way a novice

thinks of them ("connecting to the Internet") instead of the technical term you'd know if you'd already read the chapter ("TCP/IP setup"). Sure, that's important, but it's too boring to write about—as is documentation poorly translated from another language.

From manual to overdrive

Well, that sews up the column for this month. Have I forgotten anything? Write to me with your pet peeves, or your favorite

manual examples, and we'll share them in these pages. ☺

Esther Schindler (esther@bitranch.com) is technology editor at *Sm@rt Reseller* and is author of several computer books. She hopes you don't hold this against her.

Certification: a blight on our society?

by Les Bell

A number of different activities have synergistically combined to set me thinking about certification: recent discussion on an Australian Computer Society list about "the skills shortage" coupled with the difficulties of finding employment. A movement towards the creation of a Linux certification program. Some clients say, "We'd really like you to get certified." A hunger strike by Australian doctors who are having trouble getting certified. And ongoing discussions about technology management, Microsoft vs the rest of the world, etc. during coffee breaks in my courses.

All of these have driven me to the conclusion that the current drive for vendor-specific certification is a blight on our society. Let me explain.

The drive for certification

The major forces driving certification programs are the software vendors (though hardware vendors, like Intel, are doing it too). Novell started with the Certified Network Engineer qualification. Microsoft recognised a good idea when it saw it, and grabbed the ball and ran. Lotus and IBM are now on the playing field, Cisco is out there, and I'm sure I've missed others.

Why are all these vendors so keen on certification?

Ask them, and they will doubtless respond in deep and measured tones about "ensuring that our resellers and business partners meet appropriate levels of product knowledge" and stuff like that. But it's not about that at all.

It's all about vendor lock-in.

Once someone has spent \$8-20,000 and weeks to months of time studying for and obtaining certification, he has a deep and abiding commitment to that vendor. Ask someone who has just passed their MCSE what mail server he would recommend; we all know the answer. Ask a Certified Lotus Professional the same question, and you're not going to get the same answer.

Someone who has used a product, and maybe learned a lot about it, is involved. But someone who is certified is committed. It's like bacon and eggs: the chicken is involved, but the pig is committed.

Certification pays off for the vendors in other ways. By requiring resellers to have certified staff, resellers will pay for product training the vendor used to supply. This will, in turn, reduce support costs, and that's a fair-enough goal. However, there's another, bigger pay-off. By designing tests that require the use of "approved" (i.e. vendor-supplied) course materials, the software vendor can control the content of the training courses. No more unbiased comparisons of products vs market competitors. No more

revelations of bugs and work-arounds. Just clean, sanitized, uncritical, "this is how it works"-type training.

The courses can be used as an opportunity to sell related products and upgrades to a captive and highly-receptive audience. Or to discredit competitors, discuss sponsored benchmark tests and the like, without fear of contradiction. After all, the audience is committed, right?

However, the software vendors aren't in this alone.

Training companies

Certification has been great for training companies, too. The perceived need for certification feeds them a constant stream of customers. It's almost a license to print money.

Even better, costs can be cut substantially. No longer is there a need to seek knowledgeable and experienced individuals to develop and deliver courses. Find someone who can read through the course materials, do a few tests, and voila!—a certified instructor! No product development costs, just license materials from the software vendor and maybe pay a master licence fee. Of course, there's no longer a way to distinguish between training companies, other than price and the comfort of their chairs. They all offer the same, homogenized courses.

The quality of course materials provided by the vendors is not guaranteed, either. In several vendor-developed courses I have taught, I have found errors. Worse, since the course exam is based on the (incorrect) course materials, it expects the wrong answer to be given. I have found myself having to say, "In the real world, do not do what the course says. It won't work. Instead, do it this way. However, if you are doing the certification exam, and get a question about this, make sure you answer as specified in the course!"

This means that the certification exam is biased against candidates with real-world experience, who really know their stuff. In extreme cases, the only way to get through the exam is to do the course, or at least buy a study guide.

Benefits to the employer

Employers play along with this scenario quite willingly. For a start, they think that by hiring certified individuals or paying existing employees to become certified, they are somehow getting a smarter workforce.

I hate to burst their bubble, but the certification tests are a very low bar indeed compared to the skill levels of the people I've met over 20 years in this industry. If people think that all they have to know is what's in the certification tests, then we are "dumbing down" the workforce, rather than improving things.

Certification makes recruitment easier, too. There's no need to interview job applicants—just check their certifications! This meets the needs of companies which have downsized following the advice of large accountancy-based consulting organisations, as they have no experienced or knowledgeable middle managers left who could possibly assess the technical competence of job applicants. Dilbert himself has told us this is so. PHB's play right into the hands of those who advocate certification.

Putt's Law: Technology is dominated by two types of people: Those who understand what they do not manage, and those who manage what they do not understand. This is an absolutely fundamental truth, which I think lies at the heart of much of the so-called "skills crisis."

Downside to the employer

A course intended to get someone through a test doesn't impart real knowledge and especially not wisdom, much less knowledge of the "bigger picture:" competitive products, interoperability with third-party products, bugs, workarounds, situations where the product is inappropriate.

Employees lose impartiality, as they have investments in one vendors' product line. Alternatives aren't considered, to the detriment of the company. In fact, some employers recruit employees based on how well that employee represents the vendor's interests in the company. Talk about sleeping with the enemy! Can you spell "conflict of interest"? Imagine paying thousands of dollars so your staff can become evangelists for a company trying to sell to you!

Furthermore, certification doesn't mean that someone will perform well on the job. It completely ignores the value of more general problem-solving skills and experience. In fact, it devalues those qualities. In fact, I'd go so far as to say that, from the perspective of many highly-experienced people I deal with, having a vendor-specific certification is like waving around a primary school graduation certificate.

The current craze for certification is not restricted to the computer industry. A major Australian financial products supplier recently required its financial planners to undergo training and certification tests. Fine for the new hires, maybe, but people with decades of experience and product knowledge (not to mention lots of happy customers) worked nights, ignored their families, and let their work slide, just to pass the test. A great way of brewing resentment and alienating a professional workforce.

Then there's the sad case of the Australian Doctors Trained Overseas (www.adtoa.org.au). These doctors are Australian citizens, in some cases born in Australia, but trained overseas. The Australian Medical Council is unwilling to accept their degrees, obtained in countries like Canada, as equivalent to an Australian degree. Instead, these doctors, in some cases with years of experience, are forced to sit an exam which covers material they would not have used since medical school many years previously. And, not surprisingly, many fail. This is an example of certification used to protect the interests of one group at the expense of another. In this case, the argument that Canadian graduates are of a lower standard than Australians is advanced to defend the privileged positions of incumbent medical practitioners at the expense of the Australian public, particularly those in rural areas which find it difficult to obtain general practitioners.

I read in the flyleaf of a stockmarket analysis book that "It has also been recommended by the Market Technicians Association for their professional (CMT) certification." Lord-a-mighty! I would have thought that a sharemarket trader's mark of professional achievement would be an overflowing bank account, not a piece of paper that says that he read a book and passed a test!

Linux certification?

There seems to be some demand in the Linux community for certification, and I certainly couldn't deny the value of show-

ing that one is at least basically competent. But I think we have to tread carefully, here.

The Open Source movement is fundamentally about freedom, and particularly about freedom of choice. I think it is therefore absolutely important that:

1. Certification standards are designed to measure knowledge of—or even better, performance of—on-the-job skills.
2. Certification standards must be seen to be developed independently of vendors.
3. Certification standards must be developed to meet the needs of employers and practitioners, not vendors.

The Linux community is full of people with a skill level well in excess of that required for certification. Introduction and widespread acceptance of a certification scheme is likely to result in the devaluation of those peoples' abilities, and their having to spend time and money buying study guides and sitting exams, for no particularly good reason. They won't have learnt much, if anything, new and they won't do their jobs any better. However, they will resent the uncomprehending middle-managers who drove them into it.

The current "cult of certification" has been driven to the advantage of software vendors and, to a lesser extent, training companies, to the detriment of employers and worst of all, the poor employees and would-be-employees. A great many experienced and highly-competent practitioners, who are just too busy to worry about certification tests, are now being looked at askance for not having that piece of paper. Middle management needs to properly understand, and be able to interview for, skills needed in technical staff, rather than relying on a piece of paper of dubious value. ☹

Les Bell is a Sydney-based computer consultant, course author, and trainer. He has passed certification exams on several products, but resolutely refuses to become certified, as he—and his clients—value his independence. You can reach him at lesbell@lesbell.com.au.

PIM and pauper

Discovering IBM Work's PIM

by Marilyn Pizzo

Are you looking for a Personal Information Manager—but you don't want to spend a lot of money on a suite of products? Did you know that OS/2 includes a personal information manager (PIM)? It has an appointment book, a planner, a year calendar, a to-do list, a phone and address book, a contact list, a notepad, and an event monitor. Not only can you manage your appointments, but you can keep track of tasks, maintain contacts, keep notes, and remind yourself of events. It sounds like everything is covered.

But finding the PIM isn't obvious. Open the Programs folder on your desktop. Then open the Applications folder, and the IBM Works folder. Now you will see the PIM objects.

Appointed tasks

You can view and manage appointments three different ways—daily, monthly, and yearly. Your information is stored in a common database. No matter how you choose to look at your appointments, everything is there.

To view or schedule appointments on a daily basis, open the Appointment Book object in the IBM Works folder. The Appointment Book window defaults to the work week view, Monday through Sunday. If you prefer to see a different view, right click on a blank area of the window (the gray area just under Wednesday works well). Left click on the arrow to the right of Open and choose from the other options displayed. In the box below each date, your scheduled appointments will appear. The current day is outlined in red.

You can view your appointments by month using the Planner object in the IBM Works folder. The time slots are filled in where appointments have been scheduled. The blocks of time are color coded to make it easier to figure out what is going on.

To see what is scheduled in a filled in block, move the cursor onto the block. Click and hold down the left mouse button. A small window appears, showing what appointment is scheduled. The single and double arrows at the bottom of the window allow you to go forward or back a month or two.

To view the entire year, open the Year Calendar object in the IBM Works folder. The current date is highlighted in red. If you double click on a date, you will open the To-Do List for that date. You can open the Appointment Book and Planner by right clicking on the Calendar window to display a menu. From this same menu, you can choose View and see the previous or next year.

You can add, edit, or delete appointments from any of the three views you choose. To add an appointment to the Appointment Book, simply double left click an open space on a day. The New Appointment window appears. It is basically self-explanatory, but some options are noteworthy. A pop-up menu can show up to remind you of an appointment, launch a program to run at a specific time (such as tape backup), or set the appointment to recur (like a weekly staff meeting). By checking the To-Do box, the PIM automatically adds this appointment to the To-Do List. You can edit an existing appointment by double clicking on that appointment. Make your changes and click OK. It's that simple. Deleting an appointment is just as easy. Select the entry you wish to delete. Right click and choose delete.

All of these instructions are completed through the Appointment Book. From the monthly Planner, to add a new appointment, select the time slot desired. Right click and select new. To edit an appointment, click and hold down the left mouse button on the time slot. Move the cursor over the entry in the small window and release the mouse button. You can delete an entry from the Planner by right clicking on the time slot and selecting delete. From the Year Calendar you can also do these tasks. First, you must launch the Appointment Book or Planner. To do this, right click on the Calendar window and make your selection.

One option available is the alarm to remind you of an appointment. Select the Alarm button from the New or Edit Appointment windows. The slider bar allows you to adjust the lead time. A pop-up window appears to notify you of your appointment. If you want a reminder of something not related to a specific appointment (lunch, or quitting time), you can have the pop-up window or a beep. Right click to display the menu in the Appointment Book, Planner, or Calendar window. Select Options, then Alarm to open the Alarm window.

To schedule a program to run (i.e. hard drive backup), make an appointment as you would any other. Choose the Launch option. Enter the path of the program you wish to run and click OK. It is that easy.

Gotta do it

The PIM has a handy To-Do List within it. Open the To-Do List from the IBM Works folder. You will see the To-Do List Launcher and the To-Do List windows. The To-Do List Launcher displays the current month calendar. Double click on the date you want, and the To-Do List will change accordingly. You can launch the Planner by selecting the current month displayed at the top of the To-Do List

Launcher window. You can set alarms from this window by right clicking on the border of the window.

The To-Do List window displays the tasks for the date selected in the To-Do List Launcher window. To add an item to the To-Do List, select the appropriate date. Double left click on the To-Do List to display the To-Do Item-Information window. From here you can fill in the information.

As you add types to the To-Do List you will discover that the PIM remembers them. You can select it from the pull down list. To edit an existing entry on your To-Do List, double left click on the entry. When you finish a task and want to mark it as complete, right click on the entry and select Mark As Complete, and it will disappear from the To-Do List window. Delete an item on your To-Do List by right clicking on the item and selecting delete.

This will not automatically delete an appointment from the Appointment Book or Planner. You must do this from the respective window. You can also sort your To-Do List by priority or type: right click on the To-Do List window and select Sort.

The Phone/Address Book window is in the form of a notebook. To add a new entry, double left click anywhere other than where there is already an entry. You will see the New Entry window. As you fill in the information on all the pages available, you realize just how many options are available. It isn't simply name, address, and phone number. To edit an existing entry, double left click on the entry. You can change any or all of the fields and click OK when you have completed your changes.

Deleting an entry is just as easy. Right click on the entry to eliminate. Select Delete from the menu. At the bottom of the Phone Book window are four buttons—Call, Answer, Dial, and Log. Call lets you keep a record of an outgoing call and optionally dial the number for you. Answer lets you keep a record of incoming calls. Dial launches the PIM's Phone Dialer utility. (You must set up a modem when configur-

ing the PIM.) Log lets you view the phone log. To make an outgoing call, select the appropriate entry in your Phone Book, select Call, select Dial from the Calling window. Using the Log button, you can not only view the Phone Log but you can update your notes regarding the conversation, delete the entry, or even print the Phone Log.

Contact lists are always helpful. You can have multiple contact lists. To create a Contact List object, drag the Contact List template from the IBM Works folder. Adding entries is as easy as selecting the appropriate entry from the Phone Book and dragging it to the Contact List object you created. Editing an entry on the Contact List is accomplished by double left clicking on the entry. Any changes you make in the Contact List are automatically changed in the Phone Book. However, when you delete an entry in the Contact List, it is not deleted from the Phone Book.

Notepad

The Notepad allows you to store almost any type of information—text or graphics. A page can contain bitmaps, metafiles, or 4 KB of text. The text can be edited in the Notepad but graphics are view only. When you first open the Notepad object the Table of Contents is all that is there. Right click to view the menu of options. It is really easy to use this feature.

PIM Preferences, in the IBM Work folder, has some neat features. The first notebook tab is Holidays. Six of the eight holiday types have default names, but they can be changed. There are also two holiday types you can name yourself. You can pick a different color for each holiday type. These holiday types and colors are used when you denote a holiday in the To-Do List Launcher, Appointment Book, Planner, and Calendar windows.

The Phone Book tab contains four pages of options you can set to customize your Phone Book notebook. The Dialer page lets you choose the proper settings to make out-

going calls from the Phone Book. The two Custom pages allow you to customize the labels used for the entry fields on the Custom pages of each entry of the Phone Book notebook and to customize the check boxes. The New Columns page allows you to add two new columns to be displayed in the Phone Book notebook. The Appointments tab displays the page that will allow you to change some of the settings in the Appointment Book, Planner, and Year Calendar. You can change such defaults as the start and end of your workday, the time slot and duration of appointments, the lead time for appointment related alarms.

The Password page of the Preferences notebook allows you to control access to the Phone/Address Book, To-Do List, Appointment Book, Planner, Year Calendar, and Notepad. There is also a General page. Your options here concern verifying a delete choice, overdue events reminder, and automatically opening the Event Monitor when another PIM object is open.

Hey! Not bad!

I was very pleasantly surprised when I started to investigate the Personal Information Manager that is with OS/2 Warp 4. For someone who needs functionality without spending additional dollars, this is ideal. ☺

[Ed: As an extra credit experiment: Create a document in the IBM Works word processor. Using the Drives object, navigate to the document's data object in the directory on your hard disk. With the IBM Works phone book open, drag and drop a phone book entry onto the word processing document. IBM Works will attach the information—such as fax number—to your letter. When you drag the word processing document to the Faxworks printer object, it'll automatically know the fax phone number.]

Better code through refinement

Learning how to give your code polish

by John Wubbel

White granulated sugar is the result of a refinement process on sugar cane or beets. Energy companies refine oil into petroleum products, a distillation process that produces high grade fuels such as gasoline and jet fuel.

Programmers design and write software by well recognized methodologies. The process of refinement is the underlying means to improve or solve a problem, even if methodologies are ignored. The term "step wise refinement" describes work during the design phase to derive a solution. A programmer probably continues to refine not the design necessarily, but a programs' implementation. As one learns to be a better programmer, coding techniques become more polished.

Training yourself

Why do we get so hooked on programming? Like other hobbies, from oil painting to building model airplanes, the hobby is labor intensive. The satisfaction derived from the final product compensates for this.

For example, the hobby of model railroading has many attributes that fascinate engineers: mechanical engineering, signaling systems, control and distribution. The average modeler may choose to replicate a scene, a structure, or even a time table using a fast clock. To get the desired result (such as closeness to the prototype) the modeler practices a series of refinements. Each refinement results on an improvement to some aspect of the project. It is the series of refinements that reinforces the activity of modeling throughout the life of the project, giving you personal satisfaction.

Master model builders compete for awards at model building contests. While the model might be accurate to the last scale detail, often times the over riding factor winning votes for the "Best of Show" is a simple weathering technique applied to the model that captured the perfect realism.

Improving the code

Programming is very much the same way. So, let's apply the refinement process to one aspect of developing an application.

The application menu system will serve as our example. The standard menu contains a File menu item with a pull-down list, containing Open, Save, Save As, Close and Quit options. Enabling menu items is straightforward. A call to WinSendMsg() sends a message to the menu item to disable or enable it, based on the end user's actions while working with the application.

As applications go through several revisions, new functions enhance the program. The menus suddenly are out of control and not working according to the design. The conditionals that apply to control menu options become cumbersome and somewhat complex. The code becomes littered with WinSendMsg() calls. If anyone was looking over your shoulder, they'd say you are a messy unorganized programmer. Upon this realization, the only way out is to stop coding for a minute and to develop some structure and discipline.

The first step toward producing a better grade of code is to track the logical actions and conditions in a table. The more menu items, the more possible combinations of control the specification requires. Several approaches will probably work.

Start asking yourself some questions about the task; the process of refining the component starts to gel. For example, "How can I reduce the number of WinSendMsg() calls in the code?" Often asking one question leads to several others.

Send a message, Maria...

The WinSendMsg() call can be located inside a single function. How does that work? If the function contains the call, are we not making just as many calls? The answer is yes, although this type of refinement idea encourages the practice of reusing code.

The menu control logic is consolidated into the new function. A parameter for the WinSendMsg() call will be dynamic instead of static within the new function. By dynamic, I mean that the menu item identifier is not hard coded in the WinSendMsg() call. When the program fails under test, the source of the problem can be found by directing your debug efforts to this single location in the code. The behavior of the menu options and those that may fail will be related to the logic or state data prior to calling WinSendMsg().

Is there another way of thinking about this component? Yes, it is called a *state machine*. The current characteristics of the menu options, either enabled or disabled, are the state data—also known as the stimulus history. Stimulus—the end user actions—is the input to a state machine. Within the state machine is a machine that carries out the transitions of the state machine. A new stimulus, combined with the stimulus history generates a response by the machine and a new state.

The following is a sample of code with some documentation that illustrates the step of moving from a somewhat chaotic state in the code to something more refined. The



Figure 1. The bitfield definition

name of the new function is MenuVisualMgr (HWND hwndOfMenuItem, ULONG ulBitField). The function contains only two parameters. The caller passes in the handle of the menu item and the bit mask for configuring the MenuVisualMgr() logic to control the menu item and effect a change.

The MenuVisualMgr() is the black box featuring state machine transitions. The bit mask passed into the state machine is the stimulus. The bitfield or state is defined in figure 1.

In effect, the state data will transition from a current to a desired state. The actual WinSendMsg() call represents the response from the state machine. The response is only visible to the user, not the state data. So each bit represents a menu item, which is either set or cleared. The following diagram associates the menu item id(s) from the resource file menu.mnu to a specific bit in the bitfield.

Next, the bit mask needs to be defined. This logic refers to the table of conditions that defines the enabled state of a particular menu item. For example, the user opens a new file. The menu item Save option should be disabled because no filename was specified and the Save As option should be enabled.

Often times, it is easier to write things out long hand. So at the bit level, the following might be over kill on the documentation. You may however go back and validate the behavior of the menu item during unit testing to make sure it conforms to the definition of the bit mask.

For Menu Operation when WM_OPEN_FILE message is processed—see figure 3.

In the header file, the bit mask is defined as:

```
#define OPEN_FILE_OP 0xB001B
```

Therefore, you would call MenuVisualMgr(hwndMenu, OPEN_FILE_OP).

The completed function concludes the refinement. (The code may be found on the Society's Web site at www.possi.org.)

Many different abstractions of a stimulus history are possible. In order for the black box found within the state machine to calculate a response, the abstraction must be defined with care.

Finish work

This code may not be as exquisite as a 1/4" scale brass Chicago Surface Lines' street car model, decorated and completely operational, but it works. Even the sample piece of code could be further refined by an implementation in C++ and declared elegant.

Just like a model builder, the art of doing refinement takes practice and experience. You'll never win "Best of Show" on the first model. In almost all types of refinement, whether it's for improving a process or increasing performance, the result is usually a better finished product. This is why people can get hooked on programming. The mental exercise in either our work or hobby gives everyone great pleasure, including the end user. ☺

```

1 CHARGE_SUM
1 IMM_DATA
C -----
u 1 CSN_DATA
r 1 MPL_DATA
r 1 FOLLOW_UP_SCREEN
e 1 VIEW_DATA
n
t
-----
S
t 1 SAVE_2
a 1 COMMIT_TO_DATABASE
t 1 OPEN_2
e 1 NEW_2

-----
1 CHARGE_SUM
1 IMM_DATA
D -----
e 1 CSN_DATA
s 1 MPL_DATA
i 1 FOLLOW_UP_SCREEN
r 1 VIEW_DATA
e
d
-----
S
t 1 SAVE_2
a 1 COMMIT_TO_DATABASE
t 1 OPEN_2
e 1 NEW_2
Update Database
Save To Database
Open Profile
New Profile

```

Figure 2. Menu items associated with bitfields

```
0000 0000 0000 1011 0000 0000 0001 1011
0 0 0 B 0 0 1 B = 720923 OPEN_FILE_OP
```

Figure 3. When the WM_OPEN_FILE message is processed

DataBook for OS/2 Warp

by Elliot Abramowitz and Marc Abramowitz

.review

Many of us consider the Internet as a source of static information (such as in the case of reference material) or frequently changing material (such as news reports). However, the author of the DataBook for OS/2 Warp has taken the Internet one step further.

The DataBook is actually a database, using Lotus Notes to disseminate information about the OS/2 Warp family of products. Only a Web browser is required to access the book, so it is an ever-changing reference material for the OS/2 user's library. According to the author, as of February 4, 1999, this "book" consists of over 350,000 words and hundreds of illustrations in 1,138 documents.

All print books are static, with new editions coming out every so often as material is updated. A book in an electronic format has the advantage of changing almost overnight. The DataBook is now starting to cover key points of IBM's as-of-yet-unreleased new edition of Warp Server for e-business.

Two steps are required to gain access. The first is to register on the Web site (www.millennium-technology.com). Then, you order the book using the account information obtained when you registered, from either BMT Micro or via standard mail.

The first time you access the book, you need to go to the main page on the Web site and select Access DataBook. From here, you can also read more about the book, find out about the author, and try out other links.

The "book" itself gives four different ways to view the information:

- Table of contents
- Date of creation
- Date last modified
- Index

You also have the option of viewing information in either expanded or collapsed views.

DataBook for OS/2 Warp

by David Both
\$50.00

Millennium Technology, Inc
919-676-3777
dboth@millennium-technology.com
www.millennium-technology.com

The book covers a wide range of topics, including a history of OS/2, what the Workplace Shell is, the file systems that OS/2 uses and how they differ from each other, as well as everyone's favorite topic: the CONFIG.SYS file! This one chapter alone is a must read for all users.

Some sections have in-depth discussions on the topic, such as the one covering multitasking and another about the early days of OS/2. Others are just a bit under developed, such as the discussion of fixpacks. This is one area that I personally would like to have expanded! I'm always worried about installing fixpacks in the wrong order or what to do when the fixpack upgrade tells me that the cur-

rent version that it wants to install is older than what is on the drive.

The chapters are continually updated and you can find out what changes have been made by looking at the main page on the Web site.

There are just a couple of drawbacks. The book doesn't give you an easy way to move back to a previous main

2	Inside OS/2 Warp (How the primary features of OS/2, such as multitasking and memory protection work.) UPDATED! Now with information about the new Warp Server for e-business!!	01/15/99	Complete Updated!!
3	Using DOS and Windows Programs with OS/2	11/15/98	Complete
4	File Systems UPDATED! Now with information about the new JFS file system and Aurora - Warp Server for e-business!!	11/14/98	Complete Updated!!
5	The Workplace Shell - Includes the Network User Interface of Workspace on Demand.	08/23/97	Complete
6	Printing and Video	05/29/97	Complete

location (such as a chapter or section) after you follow an item that branches off the topic you are reading about. For example, if you're reading about the installation process, and see a note about what error could occur, you're transferred deep into the error chapter—without a quick way back to the original "installation" page.

I found that I needed to rely on returning to the main menu or continually bookmarking the location in Netscape. I might be doing it wrong but that's how it worked out. [Editors Note: I presume that you could still make use of your browser's history list.]

Another drawback relates to Internet connection speed. In doing this review, I frequently found the Internet busy, and when logging on from home, the modem connection speed was often unacceptably slow. I had to go to the local library to use its high connection speed to better use the book without long delays. This brings up two Internet related questions that I raised to the author:

Q David, given the amount of material that you cover have you considered burning a disk and distributing it as a combination set—both CD and online? That way, browse at their leisure and avoid the download time, yet have access to the latest corrections/additions to the book?

A "Yes, I have, but I rejected that possibility, at least for now. I feel that the book changes too frequently to allow that to be an effective means of distribution. There are also still too many areas that are unfinished.

Perhaps once those areas are finished I would issue a CD version."

Q Is there any way to do a complete print-out so that I can read it like a book? That way the 'net lag would not interfere.

A "Interesting question. I personally do not believe that it would be practical. I printed *one short chapter* and it was over 125 8¹/₂"x11" pages long even though it uses 10 point fonts. I estimate that at over 340,000 words and hundreds of illustrations, the whole thing would take about 2,500 pages to print from a browser—in part, because of the way browsers format printed material. It would probably take fewer if printed professionally, but not that many fewer."

"The only way I know of to print it is through your browser one section at a time. I could print it from Lotus Notes, but, again, it would take about five reams of paper."

The cost of the book is very reasonable, considering that it is constantly being updated all the time. For a single user the cost is \$50; VOICE members (www.os2voice.org) qualify for a \$40 rate. Interested parties can purchase it either via regular mail or through BMT electronically.

The author has an excellent set of credentials to back up this book. His certifications are as follows:

- IBM Certified OS/2 Engineer Charter Member (OS/2 2.1)
- IBM Certified OS/2 Engineer (OS/2 Warp 3)
- IBM Certified OS/2 Engineer (OS/2 Warp 4)
- IBM Certified OS/2 Instructor
- IBM Certified Warp Server Administrator
- IBM Certified Warp Server Engineer
- IBM Certified Warp Server for e-business Engineer
- IBM Certified Warp Server Instructor
- IBM Certified Enterprise Communications Specialist
- IBM Certified Network Communications Engineer
- IBM Certified Advanced eNetwork Spe-

cialist

- Microsoft Certified Professional—Windows NT Server 4.0
- IBM Professional Server Specialist
- Certified Dell Technician—PowerEdge Servers

If you that want to stay current on the ins and outs of OS/2, I would highly recommend the DataBook. ☺

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New and improved

compiled by Esther Schindler

random bits

The growing popularity of Linux is providing OS/2 users with several benefits. First, it's making it more acceptable for computer users and businesses to choose alternatives. And second, the open source code has made it possible for several Unix programs to be ported to OS/2. You'll find several such applications and utilities in the list, this month—and quite a bit more, besides.

A LodeRunner for OS/2

The good news is that there's a LodeRunner game for OS/2. While the menu text is in English, though, the documentation and help files are in Russian. Then again, you probably know the rules by now.

You can find the game at <ftp://cad.ngasu.sci-nnov.ru/pub/OS2/1r.rar> and www.os2bbs.com/file_f/games/LODERUN.ZIP.

ZMech

ZMech 0.3.01 is a visual CASE tool that allows complex event-driven systems to be interactively designed and debugged using the state machine paradigm. It uses the multiplatform IPAD-Pro core, so it's completely configurable and extendable. The XEBOT package and animated demos, available from the same site, show how this can easily be accomplished.

Out of the box, the demo version of ZMech allows highly complex systems to be interactively described through state diagrams. They can be translated into a form suitable for direct execution by an embedded micro controller or other event driven system (such as a GUI system). The code is generated and then combined with user written C/C++ and assembler source, then interactively debugged by running the compiled generated code against the original state diagrams. The system can be split into separate state machines and debugged concurrently allowing development of libraries of frequently used components and distributed multiprocessor designs.

ZMech, XEBOT, and IPAD are currently available for Linux 2.0.x (Intel), Solaris 2.5 (SPARC), OS/2, MS Windows (NT, 95, 98, and 3.1) and MSDOS.

ZMech can be obtained from www.demon.co.uk/titan/ZMECH. XEBOT and IPAD, as well as application demos, can be obtained from www.demon.co.uk/titan.

DBExpert 2.0.7

Sundial Systems has released DBExpert version 2.0.7. This is a "maintenance release" which does not explicitly add functionality to the product. Rather, it fixes several problems, including memory leaks, errors in the find function,

and some user interface issues. Thus, Sundial Systems encourages all DBExpert users to upgrade to version 2.0.7.

DBExpert is a relational database and application builder for OS/2 that is fully object-oriented in its design and interface. It gives you all the advantages of rapid database application development through the integrated use of Tables, Forms, Reports, Queries, and Macros. There's real power behind the interface; internally, it's SQL which you can edit directly. For more demanding situations, you can use REXX macros to process your data. To really bring things together, you can call your REXX macros from inside SQL queries. No other product gives you this powerful combination.

In addition to all of the power of SQL, REXX, and point and click, DBExpert supports a wide range of database engines and formats. Instead of using some proprietary database format, DBExpert uses the database format you prefer. Converting data from one format to another is virtually automatic. Better yet, you can mix database formats in a single DBExpert application.

For users of DBExpert version 2, this is a free upgrade. It can be downloaded as an update from CompuServe's OS2AVEN forum or Sundial System's web site at www.sundialsystems.com/dbexpert/update. For more information, visit Sundial's Web site at www.sundialsystems.com.

ibcd WarpUP!

The good news is that IBM is continuing to update OS/2 and components for OS/2—the problem is keeping up with them! Updates and fixpacks to the base OS, networking components, the JVM, and Netscape, not to mention Y2K evaluation tools, are freely available. But not only do you have to find and download them from various locations—you have to keep track of which options you've installed.

Indelible Blue has put together the latest fixpacks and tools from IBM, along with popular applications and utilities in an easy-to-use browser-like interface. Not just a "dump" of files, the ibcd WarpUP! CD analyzes your system, presents you with current system status and update options, automatically installs the options you choose, and maintains your update history for quick reference.

WarpUP! is the best way to update any flavor of OS/2 Warp—OS/2 Warp 3.0 and up, Warp Connect and OS/2 Warp Server. Available in two editions, Client and Client/Server, WarpUP! can be purchased individually or through a convenient annual subscription with automatic quarterly updates. The Client edition is \$19 each, or \$60 for an annual subscription. The Client/Server edition is \$30

each, or \$100 by subscription. Take a look at what's included—it's too long to list here—at www.indelible-blue.com.

Minta

Minta 2.25 is an MP3 tagging, listing and information PM utility for OS/2. It's mail-ware.

Minta displays lots of information about MP3 files. It lets you add, edit, and remove ID3 (v1.x) tags, can output files with selectable information to a list, and provides easy handling of albums and multiple files (even in different directories). Minta has WPS (drag'n'drop) support, extensive online help and documentation, and lots of configuration options.

New in 2.25, Minta has Dutch language support, advanced auto-renaming, and custom file dialog options. This version also includes ID3 v2.x detection.

You can find out more about Minta at www.informatik.uni-trier.de/CIP/thielen/minta.

OS/2 port of httptunnel 2.0

httptunnel creates a bidirectional virtual data path tunnelled in HTTP requests.

Optionally, the requests can be sent via an HTTP proxy, which is useful for users behind restrictive firewalls. If Web access is allowed through an HTTP proxy, it's possible to use httptunnel and, say, telnet or PPP to connect to a computer outside the firewall.

An OS/2 port of version 2.0 is available at [www.viaduk.net/freepage.nsf/page/01Der/\\$file/ht2_20.zip](http://www.viaduk.net/freepage.nsf/page/01Der/$file/ht2_20.zip). Note that this port has no logging at all. Original Unix source is at www.nocrew.org/software/httptunnel1.html. Send questions regarding the OS/2 port to older@iname.com. For other questions mail bug-httptunnel1@gnu.org.

ConfigMaint/2

ConfigMaint/2 version 1.0 is a free PM utility that performs analysis, optimization, and information about the config.sys. This version improves the GUI, works with J.P. Software's 4OS2, and supports 640x480 screen resolution. It's available at www1.stuttgart.netsurf.de/~kevers and www.buntspecht.de/cfgmaint.

Jasmine 2.72

Pretty Pop Software released Jasmine 2.72, an ftp front-end using the OS/2 Warp genuine part for FTP (File Transfer Protocol) for Web pages maintenance. Jasmine can copy local files to destination directory with same functions of FTP mode. Jasmine will put/copy the files and directories, only which are changed or altered from the last put/copy. You can also select if you want to put/copy this time such automatically selected files and folders. You may record the logs of uploaded files by either daily or monthly, and remove remote files that uploaded/copied and managed by Jasmine.

You can get a copy from <http://member.nifty.ne.jp/pretypop>, www.asahi-net.or.jp/~qw6k-knst, and www.asahi-net.or.jp/~qw6k-knst/software. This OS/2 application requires Watcom VX-REXX runtime module (VROBJ.DLL).

New at the OS/2 BBS

Every so often, we include a sample of the recent uploads to the OS/2 Shareware BBS. Head over to www.os2bbs.com to learn more about these files.

LOOK233.ZIP: LOOK/2 v233. 32bit text mode file viewing and navigation utility.

ENH_E120.ZIP: Enhanced E 1.20. Free-ware version of the OS/2 "E" System Editor that allows you to do a few things the "E" doesn't, like printing. (Why that wasn't included in the "E" I'll never know.) Files also includes Enhanced EE Editor.

DTB.ZIP: DeskTop Backup is a simple tool that works with InfoZip's Zip (v2.2) and Unzipsfx to build a self-extracting zipfile containing your essential desktop and other configuration information.

AV30DF.ZIP: Symantec/IBM AntiVirus Update, April 1, 1999. Detects and disinfects W97M.Melissa, X97M.Papa, and W97M.Ping.

4OS2302.ZIP: 4OS2 (build 128)—for OS/2 2.1 or later, including OS/2 Warp. 4OS2 is a complete, unique replacement for the default OS/2 command processor, CMD.EXE, the program that handles your

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commands in OS/2 character mode sessions.

ADRSTUFF.ZIP: Julian Thomas's address book utilities for the MR/2 ICE email client.

AUTOPPP.ZIP: David Forrai's REXX dialer utilities, for MR/2 ICE.

BTAG201.ZIP: Bandit Tagger 2.01. FA Partners PM Bandit Tagger. Really neat PM based tagger for email and news. Full support for MR/2 ICE.

WARPSVR1.ZIP: Windows 95/98/NT screensaver based on the OS/2 Warp Server "screensaver" bitmap available on IBM's Aurora Web site. Promote OS/2 Warp Server as the definitive server for Windows workstation environments!

DIALIP.ZIP: DIALIP 1.53, an OS/2 PM 32-bit Internet Connecting and Email Transferring program. Can be used with a scheduler to automatically connect to the Internet, send email, get or check for email for one or more users, notify of email, hangup, and exit.

MOZM3ISH.ZIP: M3 level (Alpha release) of the Mozilla Web browser for OS/2. This contains a high-quality HTML 4 layout and rendering engine, and early versions of bookmarks, history and Java support.

AICQ016.ZIP: AICQ v1.6(?) Nice text-mode ICQ client. Some bugs fixed and new features added "SwiThBack," automatically sending messages when away, na, dnd, PipePrefix, and PipePad.

CHKURL15.ZIP: CheckUrl 1.5. REXX program which can check the existence of a list of urls, HTTP or FTP, using the RxSock and Rxftp dlls, and obviously the TCPIP stack (2.0 and up) of the great operating system called OS/2.

WebMirror

WebMirror 1.40 is an advanced off-line browsing tool that allows you to re-create sections of the World Wide Web directly on your hard drive or local network. You can save particular pages, complete with text, links and graphics. Once the Web pages are saved to your hard drive (that is, once you

have "captured" them), you can refer back to the information at any time, without an online connection and additional connection charges.

In addition to bug fixes, this release of WebMirror can now identify itself as Netscape Navigator, Internet Explorer, or any other Web browser. WebMirror can be prevented from capturing files located in a directory above the one specified with the URL.

WebMirror is \$25. You can find it at www.maccasoft.com.

Carrie R. Lust

Carrie R. Lust 1.15 is a highly configurable free phone-cost and online time tracking utility for OS/2 in the tradition of Richard Papo's "MemSize" system resources monitor.

It has a fully user configurable display, with eleven stats available, user configurable, independent warnings for various events, and the ability to log all connections to disk. You'll also find easy integration into existing login scripts, and the program can control the program remotely.

Carrie R. Lust is mailware. You can find out more about the program at www.informatik.uni-trier.de/CIP/thielen/clust. Carrie R. Lust 1.15 is also available on the "Team Trier Collection" CDROM for OS/2 (see www.teamos2.ipcon.de/cdrom.htm for more info).

DreckBak ver. 3.a

The "Next Generation" of the DreckBak Disk Backup Utility for OS/2 has been released. An improved installation routine creates all directories and program objects, as well as a URL object to the support page. A new format for the program reduces the amount of editing to just a few lines, all grouped together.

DreckBak will back up to any device that is given a drive letter by OS/2. Any drive or directory can be backed up in an automated fashion without the expense of special hardware, making it ideal for removable

media. DreckBak may also be interfaced to software that can write to your tape drive or CD-ROM burner. Everything you need in one package with full Web and email support. It's available at Hobbes and <http://weisner.virtualave.net/DreckBak.html>.

WindowControls

Cramon Utilities, makers of B.U.G.S. 98, a fast paced arcade game for OS/2 and Windows, released the first version of WindowControls.

WindowControls is the tool for OS/2 users who use Windows but miss the OS/2 Workplace Shell features. This isn't the object oriented desktop for Windows—yet. Rather, it's a collection of small, OS/2-specific desktop features which make life under Windows easier. And best of all, WindowControls is freeware!

The first alpha (version 0.10) only has one feature, but a lot of other features are in the works. In version 0.10 it's possible to use the standard OS/2 Window hotkeys for "restoring, minimizing and maximizing." See what they up to by now at www.cramon.dk. ☺



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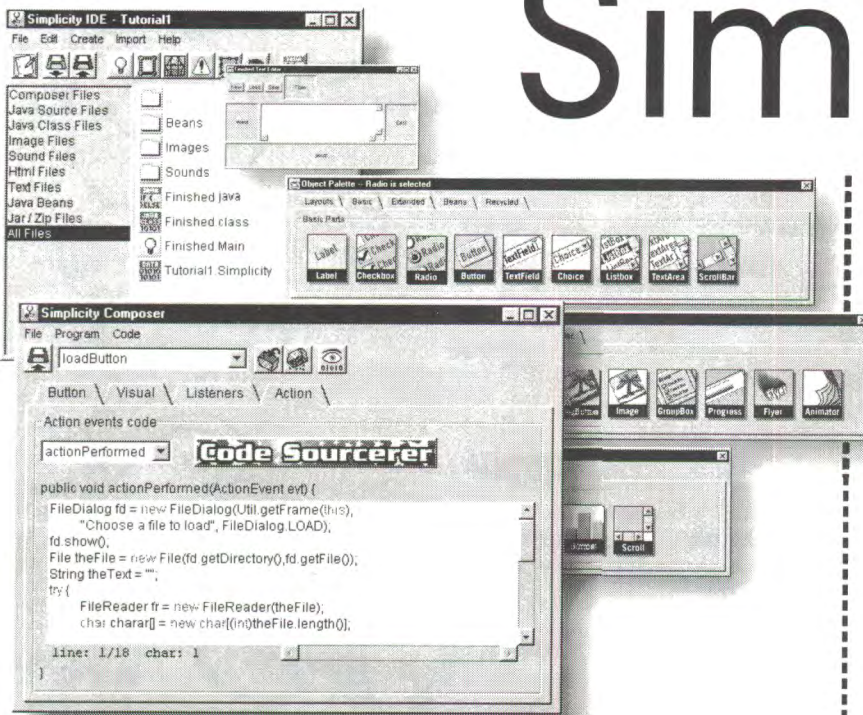
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